The National Committee on Education by Radio

1201 Sixteenth Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C.

An Ideal System of Broadcasting for America

A plan for a supplemental system of broadcasting stations was proposed formally to the Federal Communications Commission at Washington, D. C., on May 16 by the National Committee on Education by Radio. The National Committee on Education by Radio is an organization formed more than four years ago at the suggestion of the United States Commissioner of Education and consists of representatives from nine great national educational associations, including state universities, land-grant colleges, Catholic educational societies, educational broadcasters, adult education groups, the National Education Association, and the American Council on Education.

The plan proposes a government network supplementing but not supplanting or unduly interfering with the present system. Affiliated with this government network would be local, state, and institutional radio stations that are engaged in broadcasts of public welfare nature.

America is the only important nation that has permitted radio broadcasting to be practically monopolized by commercial groups. The plan proposed will conserve the advantages of the prevailing world type of governmental control and the present private system now in operation in America. The combination will give America an ideal system. A system of local stations, a government network, and private commercial networks in combination will give the nation the advantages of each system of broadcasting. The inherent limitations of one system will be offset by counteracting advantages of the other. Such a system would make available to American listeners a great variety of programs, giving each listener the opportunity of enjoying the best talent that America produces.

Listener's Choice

Have you ever turned your radio dial from one end to the other without finding a program that interested you because the same program was being repeated on all the stations within your reach? If this has been your experience, you will be interested in a plan which has been recently proposed to the Federal Communications Commission in Washington which promises to extend the type of variety of programs available to each American listener.

This plan, which is proposed by the National Committee on Education by Radio, recommends the establishment of a broadcasting system to supplement but not to supplant the present private system. This public system would give greater freedom of choice to the listener, who, under all systems, finally pays the bills. By a turn of the dial the listener could enjoy either a constructive public program or the alluring charms of rejuvenating crystals, the merits of toothpastes and mouthwashes, or the latest scheme for selling something.

The national government network would present programs in the public interest, free from advertising. Programs of entertainment and information by the best talent procurable through a national network would be available for all radio listeners. The government network, free from all the limitations of a system dependent upon advertising, could select for its programs any talent available in America and thus give American audiences the nation's best in entertainment and information.

The National Committee on Education by Radio, author of the plan, is an organization formed more than four years ago at the suggestion of the United States Commissioner of Education and consists of representatives from nine great national educational associations, including state universities, land-grant colleges, Catholic educational societies, educational broadcasters, adult education groups, the National Education Association, and the American Council on Education.

All Radio Educates

Only recently has the public generally understood the tremendous influence of radio broadcasting regardless of who sends it out. As listeners realize that every program exerts its good, bad, or indifferent effect (educates, shall we say?), it becomes increasingly apparent that the public has the most at stake in radio.

The establishment of a supplemental system of public broadcasting stations is being hailed as a recognition that an unpolluted source of information, education, culture, and wholesome entertainment is essential to the success of democratic government.

NOTE TO EDITORS

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Promotes Local Radio Stations

Local educational broadcasting stations were pioneers in American broadcasting. These stations were noncommercial in character and as such soon found themselves in severe competition with commercial stations possessing the advantages and privileges of national hookups. These smaller, local, nonprofit stations, established to promote public welfare, were steadily reduced in their radio privileges from a paltry 6 per cent in 1931 until today they represent less than 2 per cent of the total available facilities. Ten state universities still own and operate their broadcasting stations. Land-grant colleges and private institutions operate an additional twenty-four stations. The formation of such local stations would be stimulated under a plan proposed recently to the Federal Communications Commission at Washington.

The plan proposes a third great broadcasting chain to be operated by the Federal government and offering affiliation to all nonprofit stations operating solely in the public interest. The government chain will afford each of these local stations the opportunity to enrich their programs through national hookups. These stations, like those owned by the states of Wisconsin, Oregon, Ohio, Florida, Kansas, Oklahoma, and others, will be able to give such service to the people in their states as well as bring to them the talent of America on the national hookups. Such state stations have proven their value and acceptability through their public forums, like the one in Wisconsin where free time is given for all legislators, for public officials, and for all political parties. Also they have demonstrated their worth by presenting programs of general interest, as well as special programs to the schools. For purposes of public business, for health programs, for adult education, for items of local interest, such stations will be available.

The plan was presented formally to the Federal Communications Commission at Washington in response to a request of the Commission for plans for the improvement of America's broadcasting system. Proposed on behalf of education by the National Committee on Education by Radio, its advantages were seen alike by cultural and civic leaders.

The National Committee on Education by Radio, the organization behind the proposal, is a well-known organization acting in radio matters on behalf of nine important national educational associations. These nine associations represent both public and private, formal and adult, technical and professional, school and higher, state-supported and Federally-aided education. They are: American Council on Education, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, The Jesuit Educational Association, National Association of Educational Broadcasters, National Association of State Universities, National Catholic Educational Association, National Council of State Superintendents, National Education Association, and National University Extension Association.

Share the Air

Why did the American people permit an instrument so vital to popular government as instantaneous and universal communication to be seized and devoted exclusively to selling goods, making all other uses subordinate and incidental?

In spite of America's boasted aggressiveness in business fields, as a nation she has been exceedingly slow in realizing and envisioning values in the realm of social welfare. During the early years of radio development everyone's attention was centered on material progress. The noise of the dollars jingling by drowned the few feeble voices proclaiming in the wilderness the public welfare values of an intimate talk to every one of the nation's firesides. America was preoccupied, ignorant, and neglectful of intangible social services. It has required the chastening of calamity to force America to study social science.

What is needed today is a plan which gives promise of conserving for public purposes a share in the air. The present American system of broadcasting is an almost incredible absurdity. Our country stakes its existence upon universal suffrage, upon the general intelligence of its citizens, upon the spread of reliable information, upon the attitudes and judgments of all the people; and then consigns exclusively to private interests this means of universal communication. As a result, its use for general public welfare becomes inevitably subordinate and incidental.

The plan proposed by the National Committee on Education by Radio asks only for a portion of radio channels, leaving the major part of the limited available band for the use of private commercial interests. It does not ask for a definite percentage of the available radio frequencies. The amount required must be determined by technical experts and will change as modern developments take place in this comparatively new art. However, is it unreasonable for the public to reserve even as much as one-fourth of the facilities of the air for public use if merchandizing still retains three-fourths?

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Communications Commission Studies Educational Broadcasting

The Federal Communications Commission has recently completed a hearing at Washington to which were invited persons interested in educational broadcasting to present plans and recommendations for making available for purposes of culture and education, this new instrument of mass communication, the radio. Their interest was further evidenced by the announcement at the conclusion of the conference that a committee was being formed to study the various proposals and to arrive at the best possible solution to the complicated problems involved. The Commission designated as the committee's head the United States Commissioner of Education, Dr. John W. Studebaker. Other appointments will be announced from time to time by the Commission.

Radio and Freedom of Speech

Today, through radio, a man may speak to an entire nation. The power of the spoken word is enhanced beyond the wildest dreams of ancient orators. What a thrill it would have been to have listened to the Philippics of Demosthenes and Cicero or to the oratorical masterpieces of Patrick Henry and Daniel Webster! Today it is possible for Americans to listen to their President as he speaks to them in their millions of homes from the quiet and seclusion of his office. American institutions are dependent upon each man's freedom of thought and speech.

Of all principles safeguarding American institutions, the one affording the greatest protection is freedom of speech. Without it, freedom of thought is nullified. Freedom of speech includes freedom of the press as well as freedom in all means of communication. America has zealously defended freedom of the press, even to the point of permitting excesses and abuses rather than hazarding the dangers of the slightest censorship. America has recognized the same principle in maintaining the right of communication free and untrammeled for all citizens using the United States mails. Postal facilities have been extended to every citizen, to the remotest hamlet, to the rural population—even at the expense of annual deficits—in order to protect the right of universal communication. Telephone and telegraph have been made public utilities and common carriers of communication. Their service is open to all citizens who are able and ready to pay for it. The right of uncensored communication is the essential expression of free speech. Without free speech and free discussion a government of the people cannot endure. It is the bed-rock of American institutions.

Radio broadcasting is the most potent of all forms of communication. It is instantaneous and universal. It speaks to literate and illiterate alike. It calls a nation on instant notice into a great public town meeting. If freedom of the press and of the post office, of telephone and telegraph, are essential to freedom of speech, how many times more vital is radio? Public use of this communication marvel of the century must be preserved to insure America's freedom of speech. It must not be permitted to come under the control of any limited body of men or special interests. It must remain under public control for public welfare. It is not a question of the character of the private control, however honorable and decent. America cannot safely entrust the means of universal communication exclusively to any private control, since such control must be governed by the limitations of available time and channels and by the necessity for producing an adequate or even an excessive income.

Safeguarding American Broadcasting

There are over seventeen million radio receiving sets in American homes. Many of them are in use many hours each day. Recent surveys show that school children listen an average of two and one-half hours per day to radio broadcasts. For the welfare of American citizens, young and old, this broadcasting flood, influencing American thought and attitude, must not be permitted to come under the control of any groups who might use it for propaganda or other selfish purposes.

A plan has recently been proposed to the Federal Communications Commission at Washington which promises to protect American listeners from the dangers of propaganda. This plan, advanced by the National Committee on Education by Radio, proposes an independent broadcasting network presenting programs side by side with the present programs, but operated and controled by the people themselves. The programs presented on the public network will be chosen for their public welfare values.

The public system would permit broadcasts to the public schools by master teachers, bringing stimulation to teachers and pupils alike, and connecting even the most isolated classroom with the best in music, literature, information, and entertainment. State stations have already demonstrated that broadcasting improves school instruction. Even if general broadcasts to public schools should increase the effectiveness of school expenditures a mere five per cent, it would return additional values worth one hundred fifty millions annually on the three billion dollar education bill. Private as well as public schools are equally concerned in broadcasting values. In neither public nor private schools is advertising, even the unobjectionable, likely to be permitted.

Committee Represents American Education

The National Committee on Education by Radio is an organization representing nine important national educational associations. The Committee can, and, in reality, does represent education in America as can be seen from the following list of its members and the organizations with which they are associated:

Arthur G. Crane, president, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, National Association of State Universities.

James E. Cummings, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C., National Catholic Educational Association.

W. I. Griffith, director, Radio Station WOI, Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Ames, Iowa, National Association of Educational Broadcasters.

J. O. Keller, assistant to the president, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pennsylvania, National University Extension Association.

Joy Elmer Morgan, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., National Education Association.

Charles A. Robinson, S. J., Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, Missouri, The Jesuit Educational Association.

James N. Rule, state superintendent of public instruction, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, National Council of State Superintendents.

H. J. Umberger, Kansas State College of Agriculture, Manhattan, Kansas, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities.

George F. Zook, president, American Council on Education, 744 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C., American Council on Education.

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